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# AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION: NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION—STATE AND OTHER TEACHERS' ASSOCIATIONS

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BENJAMIN MARSHALL DAVIS  
Miami University

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It is said of the National Education Association that it "has been, and is now the body-guard of public-school instruction in our country." While this statement may not be taken literally, the fact remains that this Association is the one educational organization which is truly national in character, embracing as it does the interests of all parts of the country and all phases of education.

It was organized in Philadelphia on August 26, 1857, under the name of the National Teachers' Association by a group of teachers who met in response to a call sent out the previous year to all the local teachers' associations. The call itself is significant, for it expresses the spirit which has, on the whole, been manifest during the entire existence of the Association: to teachers of the United States "who are willing to unite in a general effort to promote the general welfare of our country by concentrating the wisdom and power of numerous minds, and by distributing among all the accumulated experiences of all" (57).<sup>1</sup>

The name was changed in 1870 to the National Educational Association and in 1907 to the one it now bears. As made to meet the demands of a natural growth but it has never departed from the essential principles on which it was founded. The extent to which the "accumulated experiences of all" have been "distributed among all" may be seen by a reference to the published list of titles of papers and discussions from 1857 to 1907. This list covers over seventy pages and embraces almost

<sup>1</sup> Figures refer to bibliography at end of article or to bibliographies in previous numbers of this series.

every imaginable subject of educational interest (58). Many discussions are of only passing importance; some are but means of exploiting favorite theories; others are real contributions to educational thought.

Beyond the propaganda which is expected of any large educational body the most valuable work of the Association has been through its committees which have been appointed from time to time to investigate and report upon various important questions of general interest.

The Association being a sort of clearing-house for educational ideas, its published *Proceedings* provide a valuable source of information concerning all kinds of tendencies and movements in education. Agricultural education has received a share of attention proportional to the different stages of its development. The interest of the Association in this subject as reflected in the *Proceedings* extends over four periods: the first from 1857 to 1897, the second from 1897 to 1903, the third from 1903 to 1906, and the fourth from 1906 to the present time.

Agriculture was not considered as a separate subject except as referring to agricultural colleges until the latter part of the first period. Industrial education, however, was discussed as early as 1866. In 1875 a Department of Industrial Education was formed. At this meeting the question: "Can Elements of Industrial Education be Introduced into our Common Schools?" was discussed in a paper by John D. Philbrook. He said: "Science and art with reference to their special application to industrial pursuits must be included in the modern school course." Drawing, geometry, natural history, physics, and chemistry were mentioned as the branches which lie at the foundation of industrial education.

At the meeting of the following year (1876) William T. Harris in his report as chairman of committee on "Course of Study from Primary School to University" refers to the difficulty of deciding "the amount of prominence to be given to industrial branches in comparison with those chiefly productive of theoretical culture." He says also: "The primary school has

been called upon to fit for life." In the course of study reported by the committee for the district schools, topics relating to nature are suggested as follows: "Inorganic—arithmetic, oral lessons in natural philosophy; organic—geography, oral lessons in natural history."

These two references to the early discussions of industrial education are given to show that the need of such instruction was being considered at this time, and from a somewhat general viewpoint which might include agriculture although it was not specifically mentioned. The Department of Industrial Education, however, gave its attention almost wholly to urban conditions. Drawing and manual training held prominent places in the discussions of all the meetings. In 1890 the name of the Department was very properly changed to Industrial and Manual Training, and in 1899 to Manual Training.

In 1893, at the International Congress of Education held under the auspices of the Association, agriculture had a place on the program (59) but the paper was read by a Russian and not an American. Perhaps his account of the use of agriculture in the rural schools as a school subject had something to do with directing the attention of the Association to the rural-school problem. At any rate, at the meeting of 1895 a committee of twelve was appointed to investigate and report upon rural schools as to maintenance, supervision, supply of teachers, and instruction and discipline.

The report was submitted to the meeting of 1897. It contains a number of suggestions which involve more or less agricultural instruction such as surface features of the earth including soils, weather, plant and animal life, etc. It also emphasizes the need of a course of study "framed with direct reference to actual conditions that prevail in country life and in large measure determine it. Among the most important points to be kept in mind are the following: (1) There is a general lack of appreciation of immediate surroundings; (2) there is an almost total lack of scientific skill in farm work; (3) in the country there is a great dearth of social life." Under (2) certain phases of mechanics, manual training, biology, meteorology and physics

of the atmosphere, mineralogy, and chemistry were included. Another portion of the report is devoted to the "farm as the center of interest," and a great many things which we now find in all textbooks on elementary agriculture are mentioned (60).

During the latter part of the second period (1897-1903) agriculture appeared as a topic for discussion at nearly every meeting. At the meeting of 1902 five papers were read as follows: "The Value of a Large Agricultural School in Indian Service"; "Correlation of Schoolroom and Farm Work"; "The Education of the American Farmer"; "The Practical Value of Teaching Agriculture in the Public Schools"; "The Teaching of Agriculture with Reference to Future Employment."

In 1903 a committee on "Industrial Education in Schools for Rural Communities" was appointed. The committee made its report at the meeting of 1905 and represents the most important contribution of the Association to agricultural education in the third period (1903-6). A considerable part of the report deals with agricultural subjects and their adaptation to elementary and secondary rural schools. Among the recommendations of the committee are the following: "A modification of the course of study should be made for the introduction of work, especially in the elements of agriculture and domestic science, and such further lines of industrial education as local conditions make feasible. . . . The establishment of schools distinctly industrial (agricultural high schools) in their character is absolutely necessary for the proper development and organization of the rural-school system."

A detailed course of study for all the grades is submitted. It is an interesting contrast to the course of study reported by the Committee of Twelve of 1897. In the latter the idea that agricultural subjects should receive attention in the rural schools is suggested rather than definitely stated and outlined. In the former this idea is expressed in a definite and concrete outline with illustrative lessons.

The work in agriculture for the secondary schools is particularly well outlined, and illustrated by accounts of work actually carried on in two existing agricultural high schools: one the

Dunn County (Wisconsin) School of Agriculture and Domestic Economy; the other, the Minnesota Agricultural High School connected with the Agricultural College of Minnesota (61).

The fourth period is characterized by a more active interest in agricultural education. Three important steps were taken: (a) continuation of Committee on Industrial Education in Schools for Rural Communities; (b) formation of National Committee on Agricultural Education; (c) organization of a Department of Rural and Agricultural Education.

The Committee on Industrial Education for Schools of Rural Communities made two reports, one at the meeting of the Association in 1907 and the other at the meeting of 1908.

In some preliminary investigation for the supplementary report the correspondence showed that "what was most wanted was a definite statement of what was actually being done in different parts of the country in providing facilities for industrial education in rural communities." The supplementary report represents the efforts of the committee to satisfy this demand. It consists of three parts: a discussion of the general problem, including school buildings, school gardens, manual training, nationalizing the work (referring to the Davis bill then before Congress) and in what schools agriculture should be taught; industrial work in New England, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York; experiences and opinions of individual teachers in the preceding territory (62).

The second report (1908) is limited to "a presentation of what is being done in schools representing four types of organization, as showing the possibilities in other schools of these types and the conditions under which these possibilities may become actualities." The schools selected and reported upon are the Waterford High School, at Waterford, Pa., the Cecil County High School, at Calvert, Md., the John Swaney Consolidated School, in Magnolia Township, Putnam County, Ill., and the congressional district agricultural schools located at Americus and Monroe, Ga. Each type is described in sufficient detail to give a clear understanding of its organization and actual work.

The final conclusions of the Committee are summed up in

nine paragraphs, two of which should be quoted here since they refer to conditions that continue to exist:

That the supply of properly trained teachers for carrying on this work is totally inadequate to meet even the present demand, and that the increase in the demand for such teachers in the near future requires a very large increase in the facilities for their preparation, and to supply these facilities special training schools should be established throughout the country for the preparation of elementary rural-school teachers; that the normal schools whose graduates find positions in rural schools should broaden and strengthen in every way their courses of instruction along industrial lines adapted to the needs of rural schools; that the agricultural colleges favorably situated for such work should undertake to organize special courses for the purpose of training teachers for the secondary schools, capable of giving instruction in agriculture and related subjects.

That in the growth of public sentiment, in the development of ideals, in the preparation of courses of study, and in the facilities for the training of teachers for industrial work in rural schools, decided progress has been made in recent years; but that much yet remains to be done before the importance and value of this kind of industrial education shall be fully appreciated by all concerned, and before it shall receive its appropriate recognition and find its proper place in our educational system (63).

In 1906 a call was sent out to members of the Association who were interested in agricultural education to be present at the annual meeting of the Department of Superintendence for the purpose of discussing various problems concerning this subject. There was an encouraging response and an interesting meeting was held. At this meeting the National Committee on Agricultural Education was formed. Through the efforts of this committee an application for the privilege of organizing a Department of Rural and Agricultural Education was presented to the Board of Directors of the Association, and favorably acted upon July 8, 1907 (63).

The second conference of this committee was held at the meeting of the Association of 1907. At this session three important papers were read and discussed: "The Work of the National Government in Extending Agricultural Education through the Public Schools"; "What Has Been Done and Is Being Done by Normal Schools and Agricultural Schools for Popular Education in Agriculture" (64); "The Work in Agriculture as Conducted

by State and County Organizations of Young People in Club Contests." The third conference of the committee was held at the meeting of the Department of Superintendence held at Washington in 1908. Just at this time the Davis bill (24) and the Burkett bill (24) were being considered as separate measures. Under the direction of the National Committee on Agricultural Education a conference was held with all parties interested in the two measures, resulting in the introduction in Congress of a new bill embodying the essential features of the two separate ones. A subcommittee conferred with the President of the United States, and also with the Senate Committee on Agriculture in behalf of national aid for agricultural instruction.

The fourth and fifth conferences of the committee were held at the meetings of the Department of Superintendence of 1909 and 1910. At the fourth session two committees were appointed, and reports were made at the fifth session. These were on "Credit Value of High-School Agriculture for College Entrance" and "The Course of Study in Agriculture—What Shall It Be?"

Two regular meetings of the Department of Rural and Agricultural Education have been held (in 1908 and 1909). As they are fully reported in the *Proceedings* of the Association no further reference need be made here, except to state that they were well attended and much interest was shown in the discussions. An excellent program has already been prepared for the meeting of 1910. One session promises to be of especial interest, as it is to be held jointly with the departments of Secondary Education and of Science to consider the "Practical Aspects of Science in Secondary Education with Special Reference to Introducing Materials from Agriculture, Household Arts, Technical Industries, Sanitation, etc."

It will be seen from the foregoing account that the National Education Association has been and is an important factor in agricultural education, first in the way of propaganda, by bringing the subject prominently before the teachers of the entire country, and second by real constructive work through its committees and its Department of Rural and Agricultural Education.

Through the published *Proceedings* of the Association the



development of the movement for agricultural education can be followed as in no other educational literature excepting that of the National Government through its publications of the Department of Agriculture and of the Bureau of Education.

#### STATE AND INTERSTATE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATIONS

There are about seventy of these associations. Some were in existence long before the organization of the National Teachers' Association. Most of them publish proceedings of their meetings, but for lack of funds and other causes accounts of these meetings are not always published except in local papers. Enough of these proceedings, however, are available in published form to trace any educational movement as reflected by the discussions of these meetings. One finds that agricultural education began to receive attention from these associations about the same time that the National Education Association became actively interested in it. We find, for example, the Alabama Educational Association in 1905 devoting a considerable part of its program to the subject, and calling W. M. Hays to give an address; the California State Teachers' Association in 1905 holding joint sessions with the State Farmers' Institute, and calling L. D. Harvey and A. C. True to make addresses; the Georgia Teachers' Association in its meetings of 1903, 1906, 1907, and 1908 giving prominence to the subject, in 1908 holding a conference with representative business men from forty-four of the fifty counties of the state concerning the district agricultural high schools. These illustrations are typical of the consideration given agricultural education by most of these associations at their recent meetings. Their contribution consists chiefly in creating an interest in the subject. Sometimes, however, movements are started that result in state legislation.

It is not possible in the limits of this paper to enter into further discussion of the work of these associations, instructive as it might be to follow carefully the development of agricultural education as expressed by these bodies of teachers in various sections of the country.

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57. *Historical Sketch of the National Educational Association*. Z. RICHARDS. *Proceedings of the National Educational Association* (1891), 118-33.
58. *Bibliography of Topics from 1857-1907*. *Ibid.* (1906), 659-730.

This is a classified list under fifty-nine heads.

59. "Should Rural Schools Introduce Agriculture, Chemistry, Agricultural Botany, or Arboriculture?" ERGRAFF DE KOVALEVSKY. *Ibid.* (1893), 304-7.

The writer concludes that "instruction in the rural schools can and should have an agricultural bearing."

60. "Report of the Committee of Twelve on Rural Schools." *Ibid.* (1897), pp. 385-582.

This is probably the most complete and important contribution of rural schools in American educational literature up to the date of its publication. Besides a full discussion of the four phases of the subject there are nineteen appendices devoted to such subjects as transportation of pupils, enrichment of the rural-school course, the rural-school problem, the course of study, the farm as a center of interest, etc.

61. *Report of the Committee on Industrial Education in Schools for Rural Communities*. Publications of National Educational Association: Report of Special Committee (1905), 87.

This report contains argument for industrial work, scope of work, statements of what kind of work was being done in the different types of schools in which a beginning in industrial education had been made, and the desirability of a new type of secondary school of distinctively industrial character and adapted to the needs of rural communities.

62. *Ibid.*, "Supplementary Report." *Proceedings of the National Education Association* (1907), 409-46.
63. —, "Second Report." *Ibid.* (1908), 385-448.
64. "Conference of National Committee on Agricultural Education." *Ibid.* (1907), 1063-84.